

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

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INFO SECDEF WASHDC//ISA/DSA//

CHUSMTM DHAHRAN

USCINCEUR VAIHINGEN GERMANY

C O N F I D E N T I A L JIDDA 386

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MASS, SA, US

SUBJ: FMS TO SAUDI ARABIA

1. IN COURSE OF DISCUSSION WITH CODEL WILLIAMS/STEVENS ON JANUARY 9, DEPUTY MINISTER OF DEFENSE PRINCE TURKI BIN ABD AL-AZIZ SAID HE HOPED THAT CONGRESS WOULD APPROVE SAG'S REQUEST FOR F-15'S. DECISION TO REPLACE LIGHTNINGS WITH F-15'S HAD NOT BEEN TAKEN LIGHTLY BUT ONLY AFTER CAREFUL STUDY BY MODA. SAUDI ARABIA COULD ABSORB 60 PLANES AS FAR AS PILOTS AND FACILITIES ARE CONCERNED. HOWEVER, COUNTRY COULD USE MORE. COUNTRY IS BIG AND NEEDS LONG-RANGE PLANE. IT ALSO NEEDS TO DEVELOP CREDITABLE AIR FORCE IN VIEW OF SIZE OF AIR FORCE OF NEIGHBORING COUNTRIES. TURKI WENT ON TO SAY THAT HE HOPED CONGRESS WOULD ACT QUICKLY ON SAUDI REQUEST. TIME WAS AN IMPORTANT ELEMENT NOT ONLY FROM POINT OF VIEW OF PREPARATIONS FOR ABSORPTION OF AIRCRAFT BUT ALSO FROM POINT OF VIEW OF APPEARANCES. DELAY IN GRANTING SAUDI REQUEST WILL CAUSE PEOPLE TO WONDER WHY USG IS NOT GRANTING REQUEST OF COUNTRY WITH WHICH IT IS SO FRIENDLY AND WITH WHICH IT IS SUPPOSED TO HAVE SPECIAL RELATIONSHIP. ARGUEMENT THAT DELAY IS DUE TO TECHNICAL REASONS MAY BE BELIEVED FIRST TIME IT IS USED, BUT IT IS NOT ARGUMENT THAT WILL CONTINUE TO BE
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BOUGHT. FURTHER, SAG IS WILLING TO PAY FOR AIRCRAFT. SO NO PROBLEM OF CREDIT OR FINANCE IS INVOLVED.

2. SENATOR HOLLINGS ASKED IF WE COULD BE ASSURED THAT PLANES WOULD BE USED IN SAUDI ARABIA AND NOT TRANSFERRED TO ANOTHER PARTY. TURKI SAID THAT THOUGHT OF TRANSFERRING PLANES HAD NEVER CROSSED SAG'S MIND. USG COULD

ALSO BE ASSURED OF THAT FROM PAST DEALINGS. SAG HAD NEVER DEVIATED FROM ITS WORD THAT IT WOULD NOT TRANSFER WEAPONS WITHOUT USG PERMISSION. QUESTION HAD ARISEN ABOUT FIVE YEARS AGO WHEN SAG WANTED TO TRANSFER SOME F-86'S AND T-33'S TO PAKISTAN. SAG HAD ASKED USG PERMISSION BUT USG HAD REFUSED. CONSEQUENTLY, PLANES ARE STILL HERE.

3. SENATOR RIBICOFF ASKED WHO SAUDI ARABIA'S ENEMIES WERE AND WHY IT FELT NEED OF PLANES. TURKI REPLIED THAT SAUDI ARABIA HAD NO REAL ENEMIES, SINCE IT HAD NEVER DONE ANYTHING TO ANYBODY. QUESTION WAS ONE OF PROTECTING HOLY PLACES AND OIL DEPOSITS FROM THOSE WHO MIGHT WISH TO TRY TO TAKE THEM. UNFORTUNATELY, NATURE IS SUCH THAT COUNTRY HAS TO BE STRONG TO DETER SUCH PEOPLE FROM SEEKING TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THE SITUATION. SAUDI ARABIA NEVER WANTS TO BE IN POSITION THAT UK WAS IN WHEN CHURCHILL SAID HE WOULD COOPERATE WITH THE DEVIL TO SAVE HIS COUNTRY.

4. SENATOR RIBICOFF ASKED IF SAG DISAGREED WITH USG ON ANY OF ITS POLICIES. TURKI REPLIED IN THE AFFIRMATIVE AND SAID THAT SAG WANTED ELECTRONIC COMMAND AND CONTROL DEVICES FOR ITS NAVY AND IT WANTED FMS CONTRACT WITH U.S. NAVY FOR MAINTENANCE OF SAUDI NAVAL BASES BEING BUILT IN JUBAIL AND JIDDA. GENERAL CATHEY OF USMTM EXPLAINED THAT ELECTRONIC CONTROL DEVICES WERE HF RADIO AND SECURE COMMUNICATION DEVICES AVAILABLE FROM COMMERCIAL SOURCES AND THAT

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NO AWACS WERE INVOLVED. ON THE QUESTION OF MAINTENANCE OF SAUDI NAVAL BASES, PRINCE TURKI EXPLAINED THAT SAG PREFERRED TO HAVE U.S. NAVY MAINTENANCE FOR SECURITY REASONS. HE ADDED THAT SAG EXPERIENCE WITH U.S. NAVY WAS GOOD AND IT WISHED TO CONTINUE TO EXPAND RELATIONSHIP. WEST

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